

"Tragedy To Triumph!"

Act VI The Cross

Text: Mark 15:39,

"And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that he thus  
breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God!'"

In literature, or in a play or movie, whatever the medium used to convey the story, ~~the~~ each episode builds upon the one preceeding and continues to build until finally the plot reaches a high point. This high point is usually at the most gripping point of the story.

The Passion of Jesus Christ was very much like this. It all seems to start out so innocently with a ride through the streets of Jerusalem astride a donkey, and then it continues to build in suspense and intrigue until finally the one big scene is upon Him and Jesus is confronted with the death penalty. If we were to read this Passion story as literature, we could see that it contains all of the elements necessary to make it an ideal piece of writing and perhaps a best seller. I said IF we were to read it only as literature. But if we read it and study it along the lines of being Theological and having a deep bearing upon my religion, then it takes on an aspect of not only good literature, but as being very significant for my life. And this is the only way that we can approach it.

We are all fairly familiar with all of the background of how Jesus has arrived at this ~~day~~ moment in His life when he faces his accusers before Pilate, so we need not delve into this area too much. We have also heard many things said about the trial and its legality or illegality, so we will not delve into that area either. Instead, let us look at the scene from the point of when Jesus is taken out to be crucified.

We read of His being abused by the Roman soldiers and how He is then led away to the scene of the execution. On the way a man named Simon is pressed into service to bear the cross beam of the cross,

since Jesus is unable to do so. This does not mean to imply that he was physical weakling, but this is a result of the long sleepless night He endured, as well as the physical beatings he has had and the anguish and torment He endured up to this point. So His physical strength is waning and this made the task of those performing the execution that much easier.

Mark tells us it was about the third hour when they crucified Jesus and this would have placed the time at 9:00 A.M. Matthew and Luke do not state when the crucifixion began, but they do remark that it was dark from the sixth to the ninth hour, or from 12:00 to 3:00. John tells us that Jesus was released from Pilate to the soldiers at the sixth hour or at noon. And this is where we get the tradition that He hung on the cross from noon until 3:00. But it <sup>is</sup> more likely that He hung on the cross 6 hours since crucifixion was a slow and painful death.

In this, Mark's account of the crucifixion we read that the curtain of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. This has a good deal of significance behind it. This curtain was the curtain that covered the Holy of Holies. It was the veil beyond which no man could penetrate, except the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. It was the curtain behind which the Spirit of God dwelt. So you see up to this time God had been hidden and remote. He was a God that was separated from the people by a curtain. No man knew what He was like. But in the death of Jesus we now see the way opened up to God. God was now revealed He was no longer hidden by a veil. The veil had been separated by Jesus and the way was now opened to the presence of God.

But there is also one more thing that needs to be pointed out, and this was the effect the crucifixion had upon the Roman centurion who stood by and saw that the execution was carried out in the proper manner. We read, "And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that he thus breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God.'"

In order to find out just what this means I went back to the original Greek to ~~extensive~~ satisfy my curiosity. I discovered something that I think is very significant. I checked <sup>first</sup> different ~~versions~~ translations of the Bible. In Philip's it reads, "A son of God." In the New English Bible it reads, "A Son of God." In the Jerusalem Bible it reads, "A Son of God." And in the early Revised Standard version of the Bible it also reads, "A Son of God." But in the latest version of the Revised Standard Version and in the King James Version it reads, "The Son of God."

~~Nexts find out just why I checked the Greek and it reads,   
 ~~theos oikos dios autheos oikos oikos oikos~~~~

For instance

To understand the greek we must first know that a word such a LOGOS standing by itself means A WORD. But if we place the <sup>OR THE DEFINITE ARTICLE</sup> word HO in front of it it becomes THE WORD. Thus when we look at this verse in the original Greek we see very clearly the word HO in the sentence which means that it is translated THE Son of God.

Now why the big distinction to prove whether it is A or THE? It becomes important for several reasons and the main one is that if Jesus is A Son of God, He is not really unique, for you and I are really that. But if He becomes THE Son of God, this makes Him something special and something beyond the ordinary, and so something very unique.

Jesus said as recorded in the Gospel of John, ~~He is the~~ ~~lifted up from the earth~~, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." John goes on to tell us this was to signify how he would die. Now in this we can see that Jesus is telling the magnetic power of the cross. He is telling that His sacrifice upon that cross was meant to draw people from all walks of life. So the significance of the testimony of the centurion is that ~~he~~ he is the first person to accept Christ for what He was. ~~and this is the cross~~

Now perhaps you can see why I said when we started this Denten series that I would take it in chronological order and we observed <sup>that</sup>



Palm Sunday, the first Sunday of Lent. For those of you who came here this morning thinking you were going to hear a nice little tale of a beautiful Sunday ride through the streets of Jerusalem, on a meek little donkey, by a meek little man, I am <sup>INDEED</sup> sorry to disappoint you. It is more appropriate today with these young people becoming members of the church to tell them and all of us what it means to be a Christian. *AND WHAT THAT CROSS SIGNIFIES.*

Confirmation, and church membership is not a nice little ritual that we go through for public display, or to please our parents. It is a call to discipleship. It is an acceptance that ~~this~~ Jesus Christ gave up His life for me because I am a sinner. It is not only an acceptance of what He did for me, and thus forgives me of my sins of the past, but it is a promise to live a Christian life and to try to bring others into this acceptance by my life, by my speech and by all that I do. And this my friends is a very serious step that we take ~~or~~ took when we joined the church. And if we have been content to sit in our comfortable pews Sunday after Sunday and have neglected to tell others of our Christ and what He means to <sup>us</sup>, then we have betrayed our Lord, just as surely as Judas ~~did~~, *SCARLOT DID.*

~~Perhaps some of the message is not heard and falling on deaf ears, because I was greatly surprised to hear people say~~  
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Our task as Christians is to live, to give, and to share. This means we are to live as Christians and to try to be Christians in all things. It means we are to <sup>GIVE</sup> to the Lord what we can, and what we are able to give. This means that we should <sup>GIVE OF</sup> ~~share~~ our possessions <sup>to</sup> God according to how he has blessed us. If He has blessed us with much then we must give much, and naturally if we have little we can only give little. But if we have much and we give little we are again turning our backs upon God and are subject to His damnation. To be a Christian also means to give of ourselves with our talents and to share this with others. We must share our love, our concern, our talents and above all we must share Jesus

Christ. Now is this asking too much of anyone of us here this morning?

Of course it isn't, because we each have much we can live, and give and share.

(Illustration of policeman in Indiana)

Here is an example of a common ordinary man who was involved in a bizarre circumstance and yet in it, he was able to serve His Lord. Can we common ordinary people do any less? You have seen these young people accept Jesus Christ today, and you have heard them make their ~~xxxxx~~ public acceptance of Him. Now it is up to you and I to join with them in spreading the Gospel of Christ, and to show them by our example what it means to be a Christian. Are we up to the task or was this just merely another formality we go through?

We would each do well to adopt as our theme the wonderful last verse of our closing hymn written by Miss Elizabeth Clephane who wrote,

"I take O Cross thy shadow, for my abiding place;  
I ask no other sunshine than the sunshine of His face;  
Content to let the world go by, to know no gain nor loss,  
My sinful self my only shame, my glory all the Cross."

May we each one re-examine our hearts, our lives, and our consciences <sup>WILL FIND WE</sup> and perhaps after doing so we need to re-profess and re-accept Christ in ~~our lives~~ order to set out lives right.